



3 One-Act Plays for Outlaw Playwrights
Adam Field

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Preface

Outlaw Playwrights was assembled by undergraduate theater majors (and some graduate students) at the University Park campus of Penn State, and ran from the early 90s through the early Aughts. It was generally held once a week during semesters, at 11:15 pm on Thursday nights, in a black box theater in the basement of the main theater building near North Halls and the Palmer Museum of Art in State College. Between 1997 and 1999, I had four one-acts produced by the Outlaws— *The Touched: A Very Black Comedy*, *Hearing Angels*, *Dada Circus*, and *Mortuary Puppies*. If I deem *Hearing Angels* too naïve to be included, the other three still hold some interest for me— as experiments done by a young writer with some theater experience (I had done the Carnegie Mellon pre-college program for drama as a teenager), feeling around for a way to make a one-act play interesting (a one-act being theater's equivalent of a sonnet), employing avant-garde extremity and poetic language (especially in *Mortuary Puppies*) to do so.

The Outlaws theater crowd was an interesting one— and by the time I left State College in late '98 (*Mortuary Puppies* was produced in '99 without me being there), I had spent some time hanging out and partying with them. They were, admittedly, very insular, and when I began attending Outlaws with my friends in '94/'95, we would poke fun at their dramatic gestures and semi-affected interactions (as a non theater-major, it took me a few years to infiltrate Outlaws enough to become a viable playwright for them). What I later realized is that the PSU theater crew felt vulnerable, as actors/actresses often do, among crowds different from themselves, and Outlaw Playwrights had a solid following (also) among non theater majors on campus. The feeling each Thursday night— that you could see anyone at Outlaws, making it an *el primo* occasion to see and be seen— made it heart-stopping for everyone, especially because the convention was to hang out in the L-shaped, garishly lit hallway which wrapped around the black-box theater for 15-20 minutes before the door opened. Going down the long staircase towards the L-shaped hallway and the black box, I always got butterflies.

In fact, from about dinner-time onwards I always had butterflies on Thursday nights. Outlaw Playwrights was one operative feature of PSU which made it so that for the years I was there, I never felt pinched by the football-n-frats imbroglio of State College life. Paterno, for me and for those of my ilk, might as well have been on the moon. Nineties State College was artsy. And these one-acts do the task of reliving moments for me of writing just for the hell of it, and to achieve the short-term goal of indie State College fame and fortune by making it with the Outlaws, and their minions.

Adam Fieled, 2015

Mortuary Puppies: February 11, 1999

(Three men and three women in black robes sit in a semi-circle; a candle sits before them, and a box of bibles. Inverted pentagrams are drawn on their foreheads, and their faces are powdered stark white, black lips. Call them A, B, C, D, E, F)

A: (tearing off his robe to reveal black jeans and tee-shirt) I have no supernatural insight! I can't cast a spell!

B: (pinching his stomach) I'm fat! I eat too much!

C: (rising, miming an Indian rain-dance) You guys take yourselves too seriously. I can't blame you. We're desperate for a leader. (pulling his hood over his head) We're living slumberously. We'd rather surf the Net than the ocean. We'd rather rent movies than make them. Lust is the only thing you can rely on. (crumbling into a heap on the floor, writhing)

D: (approaching C, comforting him with an embrace) Sex dominates our lives, but we don't want to admit it. (she peels hood off C's head and kisses him passionately)

E: (picking up a copy of Playboy from beneath the candle, lighting a page on fire) Look at this shit. Exploitation is rampant.

B: (pointing accusingly at E) You're desperate! You're an accident waiting to happen!(he shrinks away from E, pointing a cross at him)

E: (chasing B around in a circle) Hatred is the spice of life! Your subtle sensibilities are corrupt with bullshit!

F: (coming downstage left, lying flat on ground) Every man harbors a secret desire to be Superman.

D: (rising, tearing off robe to reveal glamorous dress, breaking into a supermodel strut) I am revolver! I am bomb! I am grenade! I can hurt!

E: (walking aimless circles) Like idlers at the funeral of a psychiatrist. (collapsing onto his knees in prayer) Like a pitchfork stuck into eternity's stomach.

F: (frantically doing sit-ups) This was the determinist exercise, intellectualized, spectacle-juiced.

C: (catching D in a full-nelson) This was detrimental planets of chanting, word-place unstymied, climaxed with whoredom!

D: (breaking away from C, spitting on him) This was the court of maybe adjourned, wrestled with casual moaning blizzards!

A: (doing Michael Jackson "moon-walk" downstage) God cooperates with Truth and Justice. God is millions of uptight people fucking themselves!

B: (taking off his shoes, beating himself in the head with them) God is implements of destruction stewing in vats!

C: (finding a razor, preparing to slit his wrists) God is a spider piercing heaven with venom and menace!

A: (knocking razor out of C's hand) Fuck death! Death is the refuse of flies! (the rest of the group forms a semi-circle around him, begins falling at his feet and feeling him up sensually, lust in their eyes) Death is the pulse of underwater nowhere! (the group begins to sex-pant) Death is the thin arm of ridiculous waving! (the group begins to climax violently) You're all a bunch of babbling crabs (he breaks from them and they whimper) Let us ride. Let us worship a lesbian gopher. Let us spit our vehemence. (he takes out a copy of the Bible from under the candle; in it are five copies of the poem "bible"; he distributes them; the rest of the group forms a line at the front of the stage and recites this poem)

B, C, D, E, F: bible is stilts for mind-midgets,
brassy as a Barnum poster, three-ringed
bible is black and white silent film
with Valentino Christ presiding
bible holds governments in thrall, muzzles
president's mouth, defecates on judge's heads
bible is Godfather ordering a kill,
hovering outside abortion clinic w/ gun
bible is Pat Buchanan riding GOP elephant
towards Bethlehem, stampeding over gays
bible is 700 Club demanding money, bogus
tears in their eyes, TV Jehovahs
bible is King Silence faced w modern ambiguity,
cancerous sewing rage in frail hearts
bible's enemy is artistry,
prophets of longing howling w compassion
bible is fire blowing anger
bible is exclusivity spilling its heinous seed
bible is shelled turtle
bible is vomit of fear
bible is a lie, an ivory toilet;
to shit in it you have to flush yourself

(During the poem, A has been tearing pages from his bible, chewing them and spitting them out. When the poem ends, he tosses the bible into the audience)

A: (approaching the other five, he tips the first in line and they fall, domino style) Somehow I found myself spending time with teenagers in coffee joints. I happened to lose my bearings and had no better place to go.

B, C, D, E, F: (from the floor, doing the wave, in unison) God is a cornball with a draggy scheme!

A: I fucked one of them but I...(weeping) couldn't come!

B, C, D, E, F: (unison, pointing at him accusingly) Sometimes impotence knows best!

A: (regaining his composure, lighting a cigarette suavely) Terrible, how our needy flesh imagines satisfaction in external monuments.

B: (rising, kneeling before A) Shut your eyes and listen— the thread of children's voices will hold our hearts in place, cozy as a hammer's nail or tire tracks on blacktop roads.

C: (rising, kneeling before B) I haven't seen my father in seven years! He jerked off in front of me and brought home porn!

D: (rising, kneeling before C) Precious bulbs bloom form horde together beg!

E: (rising, stripping off his robe in disgust) You guys are fucking ridiculous. Why do you have to make a production out of everything?

F: (rising, facing audience) Emancipate my claustrophobia! Respect my wedding dress! Ponder my teabags! Sleep! (she spits into the audience)

A: (taking F by the neck in a vice-grip) Do you belong to a food group?

F: (fighting A off, wailing) Sleep on sea-sunk nail-beds! Sleep in tart plum wine!

B: (saluting) The President's power is measured in inches! Stars and stripes become a big boner! The bald eagle a flying come-shot! When the President comes, the earth quakes! The President is scrotum-potent!

A: (letting go of F, attacking B) Your head is fuzzy with pussy-dreams!

B: (fighting him off) Saddam Hussein our leather dominatrix! Bush has discovered the joys of jello! Our head of state has a seventh-grade heart!

A: (letting go of B, lighting another cigarette) Butt. Universal emblem of frailty.

D: (approaching him sexily) You should put me in your mouth. I come lit. I don't produce noxious fumes. You can put me out, if you want. (caressing his torso) Quit me. Leave me a butt on your ashtray. Keep my ashes in a vase. Cart me out for the relatives on holidays. Sprinkle me on the Easter turkey. I'll make a hero of you; you don't need cigarettes!(she removes the cigarette from A's titillated lips)

A: (falling on his knees before D, who's now smoking his cigarette) You're the strum of Spanish minstrels, smooth thumbled suck & burst!

B: (hugging himself, shivering) Man holds himself stiff, pretending impotence.

A: (rising from his knees) He is not sleeping. He dares not to dream. His breath comes in little filaments. He fears disease.

C: (clutching his stomach, rocking back and forth) His skirmish is entirely interior. He will die clenched down on some teething ring, bent over from exertion, wishing he had a bolder to push up a hill.

D: (chastising them, hands on hips) This is all exercise. A ruse. A pigeon's quip.

F: (sudden wail) Exit signs get in my eyes! Clocks insult me with nakedness and smoke! Tortures of un-movement! I am the lost quim of Venus!

D: (hissing at F, giving him the finger) I can't handle your vibes. Silence is the climate I aspire to.

A: (approaching D, hand on heart) I can't amend myself any further. What is the great truth of your cock-eyed haunches? Bring out my bastard and love him!

D: (pushing A away, filing her nails) I proclaim myself a feminist scholar! I will not hide amidst the masks of action.

F: (approaching D, pushing A out of the way) From across the room I sense your distance! People who cannot feel are always fugitives! You eschew the possibility of female erection!

A: (throwing F to the ground) Conversation crucifies my pure thrust! Love is my dharma-soap and she's the box!

C: (still clutching his stomach, rocking) We are a generation of matches! We cannot differentiate intelligence from confusion! We are nerves without ending! We feel safest alone!

D: (settling herself in C's lap) Bed you down on rocks of scotch and time. My groove will ride your pale manipulations of phallus!

C: (throwing D off) Reflect is the principle of jellyfish!

D: (angrily, to C) Fuck your three-wheeled baby carriage scruples! You're a mortuary puppy!

C: (slowly, deliberately) I've been rigged with chess-piece brains!

D: (approaching him again, tenderly) Share your flesh, share your heart, make me whole I'll give you part.

C: (resignedly) Sobriety obliterates my supple. There are no rosetta stones in your foam.

D: (kicking him) Bolders are blundering your mountain! Shadows are glistening your shit! Crosses are sucking up your vomit! Life cooperates with pride and abundance! Death cooperates with shy and repentance! (she begins crying)

A: (moving to console, hold her) Love cooperates with everything lovely. Don't feel soft among the steely geniuses who know what to do! You inspired my first published poem, in a dream of supernatural poise! (he wraps D in his arms)

F: (sudden frenzy) Nothing to kill or die for! No religion too!

E: (coming out of trance-sleep) Fuck that! Lennon thought peace was worth dying for, didn't he? He made Yoko into a religion, didn't he? We all heard that!

A: Well, that's love for you. Yoko was his family.

E: (to group) Do you guys believe that?

C: Vestial virgins shrimps and pillars...banana bombs...cocktails of TV static...the thin arm of ridiculous waving! Sins! Window seeds tempt me into comfort!

E: This was a tower-clock striking midnight. This was the bumble of racketing rapids. This was the prick of heroic Hercules! (he produces a copy of the bible) This existed! Ha!

C: (rising, eyes closed) Move! Anywhere! Breathe!

E: (at lip of stage, with blazing eye) Shut your eyes and listen— the thread of children's voices will hold our hearts in place, cozy as a hammer's nail, or tire tracks on blacktop roads...

END PLAY

Dada Circus: September 24, 1998

(A man in black ambles slowly and deliberately onstage, possibly bearing roses. He seats himself in a chair at a table stage left. His name is James Douglas.)

J: Everything's a fight these days. We've got to fight evil! Fight racism! Free the Tibetan monks! Help the Bosnians with money, blood, sweat and tears! I see kids walking around today wearing army jackets from some thrift-store, and you know it doesn't mean a thing to them. The kids aren't fighting; it's the Baby Boomers, that's who's at the heart of our modern malaise! They know damn well that they had it better than any generation in American history— no world wars and no AIDS. I, personally, identify with these kids today. But then, I'm young at heart. (violent knock at the door) Probably someone soliciting for some goddamned Mothers Against Drunk Driving— (James opens the door to find three men in nothing but boxer shorts— Elmer, Homer, and Omar)

E: Are you James Douglas?

J: Are you a homosexual?

E: No sir— we are Elmer!

H: Homer!

O: And Omar!

E, H, O: (in unison) We're a pseudo-quasi-ersatz-alterna-white-funk-Chili Pepper rip offband!

J: Chili Pepper wha...?

E: Could you please let us in, sir? We're freezing.

J: Why the hell should I let you hoodlums into my humble abode?

E: Did you not hear us? We are Elmer!

H: Homer!

J: Alright, alright, come in. (they enter) Now what the hell are you doing here? I ain't givin' any money to no charity!

E: We're from the Society for the Humane Treatment of Overused Undergarments, and if you don't clothe us, we'll have to shampoo you (holding up Pert-Plus bottle).

O: Have you ever witnessed an Oriental Shampoo attack? It isn't pleasant.

(E, H, O form a circle around James, shampoo their hands)

J: (nervously) Do you boys like paintings? I could give you one in lieu of clothes— I'm an artist too!

H: Really?

O: Far out? We can't shampoo this guy! (the circle disperses)

J: Alright, now get the hell outta here.

E: We're naked and it's freezing— have you no compassion?

J: No! I ain't got no come, and I ain't got no passion! (grabbing them) Now git! (slams shut the door) Y' know, they say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. They'll find clothes, and they'll be stronger for having suffered. Just between you and me, I know this is some artsy-fartsy play. I know you're watching me, and I don't like it. It's Orwellian. What do you want me to do, jumping jacks? (starts doing jumping jacks) Now this is character development! This is transformation! I am in the moment! I am playing the lines! I am playing the lines! (he stops) Alright, now I'll sit here and wait. (violent knock at door). Probably another naked rock band...

(James opens the door to find a man in a Richard Nixon Halloween mask. We'll call him Dick.)

D: Trick or treat?

J: Is it Halloween?

D: No! It's the 24th anniversary of the first day of Watergate hearings! Long live Tricky Dick!

J: Now here's a real man! Alright, Dick, you can come in on one condition— you have to leave your mask on. Here, have a seat. (Dick sits) So, I was telling the audience earlier that the Baby Boomer generation is the source of our modern malaise— wouldn't you agree?

D: Let me contact Nixon for an answer.

J: You can communicate with him?

D: Yes, but it's funny— he doesn't want to talk about politics. After Nixon died he went into therapy— it's done wonders for his self-esteem. He and Pat are even making love again.

J: Without bodies?

D: No; apparently they've taken to possessing Bill and Hillary in their intimate moments.

J: I thought Hillary Clinton was frigid?

D: She is. Hillary is a prostitute working the red-light district of Washington.

J: Is she attractive?

D: Richard says she looks like Nancy Reagan, but thinner.

J: Can I ask you a personal question?

D: What?

J: Do you have any allegorical significance?

D: No, I'm a cipher.

J: Sorry to hear it.

D: The pay's good and I'm going to write a posthumous memoir.

J: Will it sell?

D: Richard's BIG in purgatory.

J: So the Catholics are right?

D: No—in heaven that's what they call New Jersey.

(Knock on door—James answers—Attractive middle-aged Anne Bancroft type)

J: Who're you? You better not try to sell me something!

C: I'm Claire Avon and I'm sleeping with your son!

J: Well then you better come right in and tell me all the juicy parts!

D: Ha! Ha! Ha! It's just like "The Graduate"! Richard loves that one! "Here's to you, Mrs. Robinson, Jesus loves you..."

J: (cutting him off) That's enough, Dick. Have a seat, Claire.

C: There are no chairs.

J: I didn't say have a chair, Claire!

C: (seating herself on the floor) Your son is ruining my life!

D: Wait...I feel Richard coming...yes! He wants to say...Claire...your...you can't say that, sir, you're a President!

C: (approaching Dick) You can communicate with spirits?

D: Just Richard Nixon. Why do you think I'm so happy all the time?

J: Alright, Claire, obviously you want me to help you, and you're certainly well made up. In fact, I'm not sure where the makeup stops and you start.

C: Your son is mad— he's always kicking and punching and screaming and yelling!

J: Then why don't you have any bruises?

C: He doesn't hurt me— he just punches and kicks aimlessly, and in public places too. It's embarrassing!

D: So why don't you leave him, and then you can...Mr. President!

C: I can't leave Andre...he's the most considerate lover I've ever had!

(At this point, the action freezes. Elmer appears onstage again, still clad in boxers. He snaps his fingers and Claire, James, and Dick collapse. Elmer sits center stage, Indian style.)

E: That scene was going downhill fast, and now here I am because the playwright wants to jar you. (Rising, bellowing) My friends are dead! The band is over! No more cocaine! No more groupies! No more amps that go to 11 and MTV Music Awards with Courtney Love! (he snaps his fingers)

(C, J, D rise to their former positions)

J: (advancing to Claire) Well, why don't you just...

(Elmer snaps— C, D, J collapse)

E: I wonder if I could get these idiots to sing the Doors. (Addressing them) When I snap my fingers, you will all become Jim Morrison simultaneously. (He snaps his fingers)

(J, C, D rise, link arms, line dance, singing "Come on baby light my fire" twice— the third time, Elmer snaps his fingers and they collapse again.)

E: It seems I have complete control over these people onstage— but how much control do I have over you? I want you all to laugh at me. Do it!...Do it! It's just a game, right? I don't care what you do. It's every man for himself, cause this is war! Everything's a fight these days, isn't it? We've got to fight evil! Fight racism! Free the Tibetan monks!

(James rises indignantly)

J: Now wait a minute, boy— those are my lines!

E: You're the only one allowed to fight evil?

J: Wake Richard Nixon up, too.

E: Richard Nixon can't wake up. That's what being Richard Nixon means!

J: (attacking him) Why you little...

(Action freezes. Homer and Omar appear onstage, normally dressed. They snap their fingers and James and Elmer collapse.)

H: When we die, the play's over.

O: Pretty existential, isn't it?

H: Not if you look at it metaphysically.

O: Which means?

H: We're actors playing a scene. "Actor" is just a personalization of action, and everyone is performing an action at all times.

O: Even Richard Nixon?

H: No— we're talking about the living.

O: What about a Republican like George Bush?

H: Again, no— we're talking about the living.

O: So what action is George Bush performing at all times?

H: Masturbation.

O: But aren't the dead, just by not living, performing a sort of negative action?

H: Ask Keith Richards.

O: We sound like we're in a Tom Stoppard play.

H: No, not a Tom Stoppard play, THE Tom Stoppard play.

O: He's only written one?

H: Yes— the rest he just sort of threw up.

O: That's an action.

H: Isn't Tom Stoppard not an actor?

O: That's true.

H: Affirmation— twenty-love!

O: What?

H: You called?

O: Huh?

H: We're playing the question game.

O: Explanation— twenty-all!

(Elmer rises, screams, charges between Homer and Omar)

E: Plagiarizing! You're plagiarizing!

H: It's in the script. (he pulls out a copy) Have a look.

E: It's a sham! It's a travesty of a mockery of a mockery of a sham!

O: That's plagiarized too.

E: At least he's honest.

O: Me?

E: No, the playwright.

H: Oh— him.

O: Are we honest?

E: Who knows? There's no plot in this piece and no character development. It's DADA— we're not really anything.

H: That's the playwright talking.

E: I didn't write the play.

O: No one does.

H: How Zen.

E: Shall we meditate?

(Homer, Elmer, Omar line up at front of stage, close their eyes, assume lotus position. Dick rises.)

D: You have no idea how uncomfortable it is in this mask. I don't know why I accepted this role— I'm not even getting paid. I've spent half of this thing on my back, the other half singing "Light My Fire" and pretending to be a Republican psychic. I have some news for you, folks— there are no Republican psychics.

(Claire rises)

C: And I get to be the Avon lady— real fuckin' funny! I've had the stupidest lines in the whole script!

D: That "considerate lover" bit?

C: I cringed in rehearsal every time I read it. I asked them to edit it out.

D: Are you fucking a teenager?

C: I am a fucking teenager!

(James rises)

J: Why are we all just standing around? This is a play, isn't it? Whoever heard of a play where nothing happens?

C: Well, look, they're meditating.

J: Is that really an action?

D: We talked about this before, didn't we?

C: Someone did.

(J, D, C snap their fingers— E, H, O rise—E, H, O snap their fingers—J, D, C collapse)

E: Do you get the feeling we're not alone here?

H: And why do we keep snapping our fingers?

O: Remember— the other three.

E: Oh, the other three— of course.

H: We're stagnating, guys.

O: I bet they're getting tired of the whole "stand up, collapse" bit.

E: Now wait a minute! Obviously we're here for a reason— they'll be patient—
(scanning audience) won't you?

H: Dammit, I've got something in my boot!

O: Does it hurt?

H: He wants to know if it hurts...

(Elmer snaps his fingers—H, O collapse)

E: I know in the script I'm supposed to commit suicide now. Just because this started as a comedy, you thought it would end one? Here's a secret for you, folks— change is absolute. Change is the only Absolute in the Universe! This is LIVING THEATER— it doesn't create a fantasy world for you to lose yourself in— it confronts you with life! Sure it's pretentious, but it's better than some sitcom, right? Isn't art supposed to grab you by the balls? By the neck (screaming) By the throat? (Elmer clutches his neck, choking, collapsing)

END PLAY

The Touched: A Very Black Comedy:
February 6, 1997

(A dilapidated old room— the Munsters meets the Bates motel— downstage left, window. Maybe an old chaise lounge and some flower-print chairs would be appropriate. Enter Helen Harold, a voluptuous young blonde— but dressed like Trent Reznor's wet dream: Goth city. With her is Timothy Whitehead, a very square GQ looking yuppie in a Gap suit.)

H: Look at this musty old place; I haven't been up here for months, not since Maggie's funeral. I made it beautiful for that; I dusted the floor and polished the tables. Everything looked new. Now here I am, the sole heir of a ghost palace! (walks stage left, gestures) Look out this window, Timothy; do you see that tree? My grandfather used to hide there when he was a kid. Eventually, he snuck girls up there too. He's another dead one.

T: Hmph! You know, talking about dead people, this place is so eerie, it's like "Twin Peaks." I feel...presences here...like we're not alone!

H: (Helen laughs nervously and pulls Timothy towards her) Don't say that, Timothy, you're frightening me! I've felt the same thing— this room has a power of its own, Timothy, this room is...(she pauses to lean in close to his face)...inhabited!

T: (breaking away from her) I wonder if we're disturbing the inhabitants?

H: (Helen moves rapidly to the windowsill) Well, maybe we are, but we have every right to; this isn't their room anymore; they're long dead!

T: (moving to console her) I see this is freakin' you out; shall we go back downstairs?

H: (as if shaking off spooks) No!...No, I'm going to stay here. (grabbing his hand) Will you stay with me, Timothy?

T: (takes on suave LOVERMAN tone) Hey, sure, baby, it's all right, I'll stay with you. I don't know what we're going to...(closes in on her, heavy sleaze) do here, though.

H: (breaking away nervously from his grip) We're going to wait. There's something else you should know about this room— Maggie died here, my grandfather did too. He used to bring his mistress up here, and my grandmother caught them, and...

T: (obviously spooked and getting impatient now) What, Helen, what? You drag me up here to tell me about your family of fucking freaks? What the hell do you want from m...

H: (screaming, hysterical): SHE KILLED HIM! MY GRANDMOTHER KILLED HIM!

T: Oh, that's great, Helen, fantastic! What the hell do you want me to do about it?

H: (runs and grabs him) Listen to me, Timothy, just listen! You can't leave me alone in this room! There's a curse on me and you've got to help me!

T: Man, this is just too fuckin' weird. I'm leaving!

H: (suddenly calm) You can't.

T: What do you mean, I can't? (Timothy tries opening the door— it stays resolutely shut— he begins to panic)

H: (suddenly very much the chastising, superior bitch) Stop struggling, Timothy. Come here, sit down, and I'll tell you what's happening. (Timothy gives up and follows her order) You think you chose to come here today. You wanted to fuck me and you know I sleep around. But you didn't choose to come here today, Timothy— I put a spell on you.

T: (tries to scream, chokes on his breath, gasps)

H: Stop fighting it. Stop. (he does) Good. Now listen, Timothy— I chose you because you're touched. You have the magic in you and you don't even know it. There's a curse on me and only you can break it. Until you do, you're under my control (pats him on the head)— got that?

T: (barely spits it out, with vengeance) F...f...fine!

H: Good. Now, swear on your mother's eyes that you're not going to leave me here.

T: (frantically, struggling to form the words)
I...won't...bbbring...my....mother...into...this...she's a Christian!!

H: (strokes his leg like she would a cat) Oh but you will, Timothy— swear on your mother's eyes that you're not going to leave me.

T: I...won't...leave you here...BITCH!

H: (sitting in his lap) Good! (kisses him on the cheek) Remember, darling, that was a binding oath you just took— if you break it, the only way to pay is with blood!

T: (regaining his ability to speak) Are you finally going to tell me what this shit means now?

H: My mother hates me. She's jealous as hell— all witches are. She's also wiser and more powerful than I am— celibate witches gain strength! She's cursed me. She's got me trapped here. Sometimes she won't let me eat, sometimes she won't let me sleep, and she keeps threatening to kill me. And you can kill her. You're touched. All you have to do is keep saying Hail Marys until she drops! Only...Timothy...(runs her hand through his hair) you must not let go of my hand. Do you understand that? You must not let go of my hand. Promise me you won't.

T: Helen, I promise you, I won't let go of your hand. But can we get this thing over with now? (very little boyish) I've got a bad headache and my tummy hurts!

H: (smiling radiantly) Yes, Timothy, let's go...up we go...there's a good boy...

(they exit arm-in-arm, Timothy limping— end scene)

(Lights up on a tiny, sparsely furnished bedroom. On a rocking chair, facing the audience and knitting violently is Victoria Harold, Helen's mother. She has a furrowed brow and stern look about her— very Madame DeFarge.)

V: The child thinks I don't know what she's up to: the ignorance! Does she think my power that shriveled? Touched he may be, but he'll not leave this house alive! I'll send that Hail Mary through him with a force Mary herself'll feel! She thinks she's going to leave me to die alone; the selfishness! Why should she be allowed to leave, when no one else has! That little damned whore! I own her, body and soul, and she don't even know it! I am the goddess of this house, and no one's taking that away from me— the goddess!

(Helen and Timothy enter, hands clasped tightly. They approach Victoria's chair.)

V: (turning herself in her chair slightly to face them) You're not leaving this house, Helen, you're not! You're stupid to think you can! No Hail Mary will save you!

H: (beseechingly, she puts a firm arm around Timothy's waist) Concentrate, Timothy, pray; and don't let go! Mother, I've been taken advantage of enough; you've abused me since I was born, used your power against me, and I won't take it anymore!

V: (begins to knit again) You can't contradict a curse. What I say, goes! There's no way around it; you're not getting out of this house! Let her go, Timothy; what do you care about her? Why should you be dragged into her mess? She doesn't care about you, she's just using you; she'll destroy you, if that's what it takes!

H: NOO!! Concentrate, Timothy, don't listen to her...(Timothy begins to chant, with his eyes shut, "Hail Mary full of grace, Hail...")...AAAHHH! Tighter, hold my hand tighter; it's burning up; it's on fire; tighter! CONCENTRATE!

V: Let go, boy! Let go, and end your pain! Why should you suffer for her? You're doing this for nothing! You're suffering in vain!

H: (Helen appears to fading fast under her mother's gaze. Timothy is still muttering, catatonic) It's not in vain! OOOOOOOOWWW! Don't let go! I love you for this, Timothy, we'll get married, have children, I swear just please HOLD ON...

V: Lies, lies! She's playing with your mind, boy; she's a witch! She wants your blood, and she won't stop until you're dead...(Victoria begins sputtering and drops her knitting)

H: You're doing it, Timothy; we're winning! I can feel it! Concentrate, hold TIGHTER, concentrate, don't let go—don't let go!

V: You're going to kill me; have mercy! Timothy! Do you want this guilt on your hands? How will you live with yourself? Let go of her hand; and give back the only thing this old maid still owns!

H: You don't own me, you hag! Don't let go, Timothy!

V: (coughing gets worse) You're going to kill me; my heart can't take the strain! Have mercy, have mercy! I'll let you leave, Helen, I promise; have MERCY!

H: (triumphant hand placed on hip) Why should I? Tighter, Timothy, harder— "Hail Mary, full of Grace"— SAY IT!

T: (sweating profusely, Timothy stumbles) H-H-Hail Mary, full of Grace, Hail Mary, full of...

V: You're choking me. I can't breathe...Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!

H: Harder! Don't let go!

V: You...leave...mercy...mercy! (she appears to die)

H: Keep on going! Harder!

T: (snapping out of his trance) Helen, she's dead! We killed her!

H: (letting go of his hand, Helen opens a window and fans herself daintily) We did what we needed to do. The stubborn old bitch only lived to torture me anyway.

T: I thought she was faking it; did you know it was for real?

H: Of course I knew it was for real! You're touched, for God's sake! You could kill a battalion!

T: She's a human being, for fuck's sake. How could you take advantage of my power?

H: (comes down from windowsill and faces him) What were my options, Timothy? Let you run away, and lose my one chance to escape this hell?

T: You didn't have to kill her! She was begging for your mercy!

H: I had to kill her. (she sidles up to him) That's what witches do, remember?

T: You evil bitch! (throws her aside) You manipulated me! Hail Mary, full of Grace, Hail Mary, full of...

H: Stop that, Timothy, you're hurting me...you're making me sick! Mercy! Have mercy on me; I shouldn't have killed her, it was a mistake; have mercy!

T: Fine, bitch; I'm not gonna take part in a second homicide! But I'm leaving, and I'm warning you— if I ever see you again, I'm going to fucking KILL you!

H: You're weak; I need a strong man!

T: You need some serious therapy, is what you need, BITCH! I'm leaving, and if the cops come, I was never here in the first place— got that?

H: FUCK OFF, you BLOODY WANKER!

(Timothy exits, slamming the door behind him)

H: (slumps into a chair) Where the fuck am I gonna go? I didn't have anyone but this old dead witch. (she rises nervously) What am I gonna do with a witches' corpse anyway? Throw it on the fire, or in the woods, or...

(Victoria's eyes open suddenly, and she rises. Helen freezes)

V: You underestimated me. You were deceived by a ruse. You don't have a witches' suspicious heart; you have the heart of a woman! A plain old ordinary CUNT! You can't speak— don't even try. You're going to serve me until the day you die— silently, like a dog! And, Helen...(Victoria claps her hands, and Timothy re-enters)...say hello to your new father-in-law!

(Victoria and Timothy passionately embrace, while Helen falls to her knees and slumps to the floor.)

T: (smirking, breaks embrace briefly, looks at audience) Now THAT'S witchcraft!
(Timothy and Victoria embrace wildly again)

END PLAY